

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

UNCLAS ABIDJAN 0339

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, IV
SUBJECT: GISCARD ARRIVES

REF: ABIDJAN 0238

1. AFTER A TWO-AND-ONE HALF HOUR FLIGHT FROM PARIS
ABOARD HIS CONCORDE, PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING
ARRIVED AT PORT BOUET AIRPORT EXACTLY ACCORDING TO
SCHEDULE. THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. D'ESTAING WERE VERY
WARMLY WELCOMED BY PRESIDENT AND MRS. HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY
AND PRACTICALLY EVERYONE WHO IS ANYONE IN IVORY COAST.
AFTER A SIMPLE BUT DIGNIFIED AND IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY
AT THE AIRPORT, GISCARD TOURED A CITY WHICH HAD BEEN
SCRUBBED, PAINTED AND REPAVED TO RECEIVE
"LE GRAND PATRON."

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2. PRECEDED BY SECURITY FORCES, ESCORTED BY AN ARRAY
OF IVORIAN POLICE ON MOTORCYCLES AND FOLLOWED BY A
SEEMINGLY ENDLESS LINE OF MERCEDES FERRYING A GOOD PORTION
OF THE GOIC AND OTHER VIPS, GISCARD MADE HIS WAY ALONG
THE CLEANED AND CLORFULLY ADORNED AVENUES OF
ABIDJAN. AT ONE POINT, AS HE WAS DRIVEN ALONGSIDE THE

LAGOON, BOATS FOLLOWED HIS MOTORCADE. ALMOST EVERYWHERE ALONG THE WAY A VARIETY OF SMALL BANDS PLAYED AFRICAN MUSIC, GIVING RHYTHM TO THE WARM AND FESTIVE MOOD OF THE CROWDS. WEARING VARIETY OF COLORFUL SHIRTS AND DRESSES, OFTEN IMPRINTED WITH THE LIKENESSES OF GISCARD AND HOUPHOUET, THE PEOPLE CLAPPED THEIR HANDS AND DANCED TO THE MUSIC. AS GISCARD PASSED, STANDING NEXT TO HOUPHOUET IN THE CAR, WAVING TO THE CROWDS LINING THE STREETS, THE PEOPLE RESPONDED WARMLY AND WITH ENTHUSIASM. THE CROWDS VARIED IN SIZE FROM PLACE TO PLACE, BUT WERE AT LEAST FOUR TO FIVE DEEP AT MANY POINTS ALONG THE MOTORCADE ROUTE. LOCAL AUTHORITIES ESTIMATE HALF A MILLION PEOPLE ATTENDED THE MOTORCADE.

3. THE WARM AND ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION GIVEN GISCARD GOES BEYOND THE SYMBOLIC AND SENTIMENTAL HOMAGE DUE THE PRESIDENT OF THE FORMER MOTHER COUNTRY. IN THE WORDS OF GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED "FRATERNITE MATIN," GISCARD IS RECEIVED AS "THE DEFENDER OF AN AFRICA FOR AFRICANS," AND AS A MAN WHO "RESPECTS AND KEEPS THE COMMITMENTS FRANCE HAS MADE AND NEVER FAILS TO HONOR." CITING THE SHABA AFFAIR AS AN EXAMPLE, "FRATERNITE MATIN" GOES ON TO STATE THAT, "IN A TROUBLED WORLD GRIPPED WITH VIOLENCE, WHERE EVEN THE GREAT POWERS DO NOT HESITATE TO ABANDON THEIR FRIENDS TO ADVANCE THEIR OWN INTERESTS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW ONE CAN COMPLETELY COUNT ON TRUE

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FRIENDS. M. GISCARD D'ESTAING AND FRANCE ARE SUCH FRIENDS."

4. AS EXPECTED, GISCARD'S VISIT IS OFF TO AN EXCELLENT START, BOTH FOR HIM AND FOR HOUPHOUET. EMBASSY WILL BE REPORTING EVENTS AS THEY DEVELOP.

STEARNS

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